

# COVID-19: PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR ESSENTIAL BUSINESSES OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

This document provides general guidance on the prevention and management of COVID-19 for essential businesses providing services to the public (e.g., grocery stores, hardware stores, restaurants providing take-out service, etc.).

As the COVID-19 pandemic is evolving rapidly, this guidance is subject to change. Please visit [york.ca/covid19](http://york.ca/covid19) regularly for updates and additional guidance.

## Physical distancing and minimizing points of contact

- Consider adding a physical barrier to safeguard staff and customers (e.g., plexiglass barrier or plastic sheeting at checkout counters)
- Limit the number of staff and customers in the premise at a given time
- If line-ups cannot be prevented, clearly mark the floors (with tape) to show customers where they should stand while in line to ensure proper distancing (i.e. at least two metres)
- Avoid self-service counters (e.g., bulk food stations, coffee, frozen yogurt/soft service ice cream dispenser, hot food)
  - Sell pre-packaged items and/or have a designated staff member assist customers with customized orders, while adhering to infection prevention and control measures (e.g., handwashing, physical distancing)
- Consider having dedicated shopping hours (e.g., first opening hour of shopping) for those most at risk (e.g., seniors, individuals with underlying health conditions, people living with disabilities)
- Promote contactless payment (tap and pay, mobile payment) to limit the handling of cash and touching of pin pads
- Consider options such as buy-online-pick-up in-store, curbside pick-up, drive-through or home delivery

## Infection prevention and control

- Wipe down carts and shopping baskets before and after every use
- Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer stations to customers at the entrance and throughout the premise (if possible)
- Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer to frontline staff who are unable to wash their hands frequently with soap and water
  - Wearing gloves is not required. If staff choose to wear gloves, frequent handwashing and/or the use of hand sanitizer is still required
- Increase ventilation (e.g., opening windows, increasing air circulation)
- In addition to standard protocols for daily cleaning, increase the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces such as door handles, hand rails, turnstiles, desks, keyboards, phones, staff common room amenities and appliances, etc.

- Provide no-touch waste bins in common areas
- Wipe down self-service units (e.g., self-checkout touch screens, smart kiosks, pin pads) between customers
- If customers bring reusable bags, have them bag their own purchases

### **Communication**

- Encourage customers to maintain a distance of at least two metres from others
- Post simple signage to clearly communicate to customers the safety precautions and physical distancing measures that are being taken
- Encourage customers who are feeling unwell to stay home and delay their visit.
  - Post [screening posters](#) at entrances; posters available at [york.ca/covid19](http://york.ca/covid19) under the Resources heading
- Actively encourage sick employees to stay home
- Employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness (fever, cough, difficulty breathing) should take the [COVID-19 self-assessment](#) and stay home and self-isolate for 14 days after symptoms first begin
- Employers should consider relaxed sick leave policies for employees who are sick
- Employers should consider flexible work arrangements that allow employees to stay home

### **Separate sick employees**

- If you or your employees become symptomatic with a fever, cough, or difficulty breathing while working, notify your supervisor, separate yourself from others (two metres) and put on a mask (if available). Symptomatic individuals should go home and take the [COVID-19 self-assessment](#)

### **Considerations for workplace practices/operations**

- Ensure practices/operations minimize exposure between staff and staff and the public
  - Postpone or cancel in-person meetings
  - Consider flexible worksites (working from home, telecommuting) and flexible work hours (staggered shifts) to increase the physical distance among staff
  - Revise practices so that staff maintain a distance of at least two metres from other people
- Ensure a process is in place to regularly communicate information to staff. Anticipate rumours, misinformation, and staff fear and anxiety, and plan communications accordingly

### **Business continuity planning**

- Ensure that a business continuity plan is in place and disseminated to all staff and partners
- Templates are available through the City of Toronto and Insurance Bureau of Canada
  - Identify essential business functions, essential jobs or roles, and critical elements within your supply chains (e.g., supplies, logistics) required to maintain business operations
  - Plan for how the business will operate if there is increasing absenteeism or if supply chains are interrupted
- The COVID-19 pandemic is evolving rapidly; employers should plan to be able to respond in a flexible way as the situation unfolds and be prepared to change their business response plans as needed
- Ensure that there is technological infrastructure in place to support staff who may be able to work from home